

MICHIGAN
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

POSITION STATEMENT SUPPORTING
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

The Michigan State Board of Education believes that Michigan's public schools should expand international education learning opportunities for all students in pre-kindergarten through post-secondary. International education promotes knowledge and understanding of other countries including their language, history, geography, religion, arts, and political and economic systems.

As a result, students' abilities to function successfully in a multi-cultural, economically interdependent world are greatly enhanced. In addition to ensuring that students master reading, writing and mathematics, we must provide opportunities to acquire an understanding and appreciation of the world and its diverse people. Students may then understand their connection with other countries and cultures and how global issues are inextricably linked to their lives and futures.

International education goes beyond learning facts and figures about other nations. It promotes understanding of cultural differences and similarities and enables students to understand how world affairs affect their lives and their community, state and nation. Such learning may occur through interdisciplinary projects focusing on worldwide issues such as the environment, energy, conflict resolution, and human and civil rights. The study of a language other than English is a valuable tool in teaching students about other cultures and is believed to improve critical thinking skills as well.

Local school districts may optimize existing resources to more fully integrate international education into their classrooms and schools:

- Integrate a worldwide perspective within existing curricula at the elementary and secondary level (geography, history, government, economics, social studies, second languages, mathematics, the arts and science) to provide students with exposure to other cultures.
- Adopt policies and support programs that enable students to become proficient in English and at least one other language (i.e. begin study of world languages in early elementary and continue through high school).
- Provide opportunities for and host field study programs for teachers and students.
- Use community resources such as museums, libraries, guest speakers, colleges and universities, and cultural centers, as well as internal resources such as students, staff, parents, and community members' personal experiences abroad to enhance classroom instruction.
- Employ internal resources such as after school language clubs, elective courses, etc.
- Provide professional development opportunities to improve knowledge of our nation and of other nations and to increase competence in second languages.

- Optimize use of existing technology to enhance teachers' and students' communication with, and information gathering about other cultures.
- Apply existing research to incorporate international education in public schools and share successful practices with others.

America's future depends on our ability to reach out to the world and embrace the best contributions of all people. Citizens of this generation as well as future generations must have the skills, abilities, and knowledge to preserve and further this nation and its ideals. Providing students with a comprehensive, integrated international education will assist in the attainment of these goals.

Adopted October 12, 2004